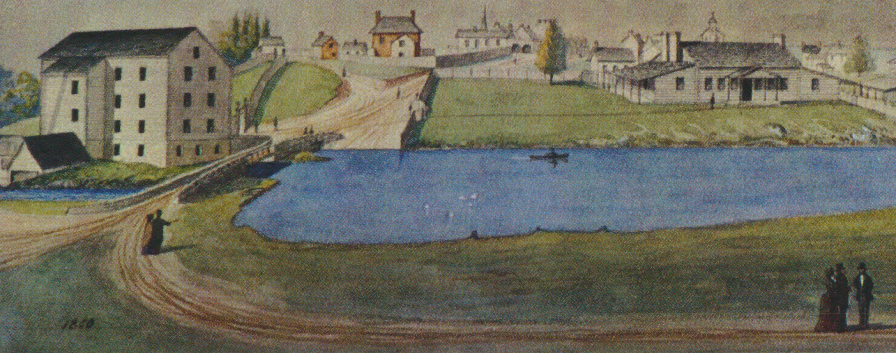


TAMARACK ON THE GRAND

The Story of a River



TAMARACK

ON THE GRAND

From the country that brought you Ian and Sylvia, Joni Mitchell, Gordon Lightfoot and Stan Rogers—a new voice has arrived from the North! Tamarack has become Canada's best-known folk trio over the past 16 years and is now bringing strong original songs, bone-chilling harmonies and richly textured acoustic sounds to enthusiastic new audiences around the world. Their finely crafted material echoes with tradition and history, but rings true to contemporary listeners.

These songs were commissioned by the Elora Festival, to celebrate the naming of the Grand River as a Canadian Heritage River.



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705 S. Washington St.
Naperville, IL 60540-6654
(708) 305-0770

Engineered by Jeff Bird. Recorded at Ty Tyrfu, Guelph.

* Engineered by James Gordon and Charlie Fox. Recorded at The Laundry Room Studio, Guelph.

Cover Art: *Sketch of Part of the Town of Guelph, Canada West* by David Johnston Kennedy, courtesy University of Guelph.

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1. **Our White Man's Word** [2:50]
2. **Pawpine** [4:23]
3. **The Song My Paddle Sings** [3:00]
4. **Lochaber No More/
Skirl of the Pipes** [5:12]
5. **The Elora Mill** [3:30]
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- *9. **Lancashire Lasses** [3:10]
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Our White Man's Word

For as long as the grass grows,
As long as the wind blows,
As long as the sun shines,
As long as the river winds
We'll give you that river
We will give you our white man's word.

From the north to the south,
From the source to the mouth,
And all the lands that lie
Six miles each side
We'll give you that river
We will give you our white man's word.
Mohawk, Seneca, Tuscarora,
Onandaga, Cayuga, weep no more
For your villages back in the Finger Lakes.
As loyal subjects of King George
We trust the keepers of the Western Door
With a new home that no foe can ever take.

By the king's command
We grant this land
It is yours forever.
Six Nations together,
We'll give you that river
We will give you our white man's word.

For fighting for the the Royal crown
The Yankees burned your longhouses down,
And they stole away your own ancestral lands,
And that, our friends, we promise you
Is something we would never do,
You'll be safe from harm along the Grand.

She Is Fickle

You'll know why they call it Water Street
If you come in the springtime floods.
Put your "Wellies" on your feet
Or we'll lose you in the mud.

Oh the river she is fickle,
She's a mystery to me.
In the summer she's a trickle,
In the spring a rolling sea.

Sometimes in the past she's been
As wide as the mighty Nile,
Other time's she's just as thin
As an Undertaker's smile.

Sometimes that river bed's so dry
You can walk from shore to shore.
Other times it gets so high
You can fish right from your door

Sometimes the Grand has earned its name,
Other times its mire and muck.
And sometimes it's a swampy shame,
Too shallow for a duck.

Pawpine

The true story of Richard Pierpoint, the first settler of the Fergus area

born a free man in Senegal in 1744
captured at sixteen in a tribal war
down the Gambia River he was taken in chains
the man they called Pawpine never saw his home again

at James Fort they sold him into slavery
to the Royal African Company
and he was thrown into the hold of a ship bound away
far over the ocean to Charleston Bay

sold to a soldier of the British Crown
when the Revolutionary War came Pawpine found
that he fought for the redcoats and he fought so brave
for the same King whose men first had made him a slave

in his dreams he still lives by the Gambia shore
not the frozen grey Grand by his cabin door
though they said he was free, still his heart stayed in chains
may his soul roll home down that river again

with other slaves he fought with Butler at Niagara Falls
when the war was over Haldimand said he would free them all
so Pawpine pressed him for passage home to Africa
but he was granted land in Upper Canada

in the war of 1812 he took up arms once again
with Captain Runchey's company of coloured men
for their service at Lundy's Lane and Queenston Heights
from this cold country Pawpine thought they'd earned their flight

but to the unbroken wilderness now they were sent
to make a new start with a black settlement
and though he tried till he died, still he never could
feel at home in those lonely northern woods

The Grand River Canal

when I was young I used to roam on the banks of the River Grand
where it flowed by my father's home north of the Indiana dam
to watch the heavy-laden arks piled high with whiskey, flour and pork
gliding down towards the locks from the busy docks of York

long summer afternoons I filled, I'd hail each boat as she passed by
with lumber from the Davis mills, Oneida gypsum gleaming white,
the steamer Dover running fast from Braniffort south to Buffalo
I'd watch her as her wheel thrashed past and dream of worlds I'd never go

oh say don't you remember the sound of the bell
that called to the lockmasters on the Grand River canal?

when I had grown to be a man, I left my home beside the locks
headed south along the Grand, sailed away from Port Maitland's docks
running from a dying farm to study law and politics
trading the muscle in my arm for a wealth of knavish tricks

now the years too fast have flown, I trace the pathways of my youth
the old canal's too overgrown to float an Iroquois canoe
and the arks are lying broken, the villages have turned their backs
on the river, they seek their future gazing down a RR track

The Elora Mill

The mills of the gods grind slow and they grind exceeding fine
I'd like to have such work to show but I haven't got the time
so open up the sluice and let the water down the race
set the stones a' spinning at a profitable pace

there was a time in this fair land when fortune on us smiled
there weren't another mill on hand for a healthy span of miles
now there's mills in Fergus and in Salem, in Guelph upon the Speed
so, if you want a job tomorrow a bit more speed is what you need

oh we grind as good as Goldies, but we can do it cheaper
so don't haul your grain to town boys, keep it in Elora
one good turn deserves another, ain't that what a neighbour's for?
and what you save here in our mill you can spend down in our store

when the grain we buy turns mouldy it still can fill a need
we cook it up next door in our own distillery
when the whiskey's in the bottle tote the mash out to the pens
fatten up our cattle, sell the booze to thirsty men

there's sawblades on the second floor whining through the pine
some say it's the sound of money, some the sound of demons dying
the logs float down from Luther to our pond below the bridge
our lumber builds the farmers' barns and the mansions on the ridge

just as long as there's water flowing down the Grand
just as long as these old stone walls will stand
there'll be a turbine spinning in this mill above the gorge
there'll be bread upon the table and a fire in the forge

Buried Treasure

Maybe it was buried treasure, maybe it was not,
Maybe it was kids out having fun,
But something made somebody dig up Henry Furrie's grave
One moonless night in the spring of '41.

From Port Maitland to Elora there has long been river lore
About fortunes hidden on the Grand.
Legends of old about chests of gold
Buried somewhere out there in the sand.

And the Mohawks often talk of when they fought with General Brock
And stole a shipment of American gold,
And when those yankees pursued, they dumped the gold from their
canoes,
Somewhere up the river, I am told.

And some wondered whether there was Union treasure
Buried back around the Civil War.
To keep it from the South, they'd come up to the mouth
Of the Grand and hid it near the shore.

And some folks think it's true about the Spanish pirate who
Landed down Dunnville way and bought a farm.
And he buried somewhere there a treasure chest where
He thought it would be safe from harm.

When old Henry went to heaven back in 1887
And they laid him in the cold, cold ground,
The mourners with the task of lowering his casket
Say it weighed a couple thousand pounds.

And some of them recalled how Henry used to always
Boast about a map he hid someplace;
With a shovel in his hand some saw him come up from the Grand
With a great big smile on his face.

The Skirl of the Pipes

Just a walk by the river
Makes my highland heart shiver
When I hear the pipes playing an old Scottish tune
Like *The Rowan Tree*,
That one always sends me
Back to yon bonny braes where the sweet heather blooms.

When first into this country I travelled
I felt all alone in a strange foreign land,
But when I first heard the skirl
Of the pipes this new world
Became a little bit of Scotland
By the banks of the Grand.

And when James Webster wed
Pretty Maggie, the pipes led
Them from church with *My Love is But a Lassie Yet*
Not a single dry eye,
As he kissed his new bride
At the first Fergus wedding, we will not soon forget.

And in the tavern that night
Didn't the pipes ring out bright
As we danced a fine reel 'round the new pine plank floor?
And we all looked so proud
When they played *Miss MacLeod*
And we laughed when they launched into *A Maiden No More*.

When young James Duncan died,
Well, we all had a cry-
The first death in Fergus, and the town took it hard.
And they played him a chorus
Of *The Flowers of the Forest*
Around the first grave in St. Andrew's Church yard.

And the pipers and drummers
Played *The Last Rose of Summer*
As our brave volunteers marched down Tower Street Hill
And an *Auld Lang Syne*
Welcomed 1839
And *The Dusty Miller* greeted the first grain from our mill.

When first into this country I travelled
I felt all alone in a strange foreign land,
But when I first heard the skirl
Of the pipes this new world
Became a little bit of Scotland
By the banks of the Grand.

Dufferin County

he's got the dust of Dufferin County chafing at his neck
he's got a thirty dollar Timex on his wrist
he loves the view from these fields as they run straight and flat and true
out to the curve of the horizon on an evening like this
there's a fence line made of stumps and roots his grandfather pulled
out of the rocky soil the glaciers left behind
sometimes at night he hears the kids from the shop class in town
steal the warm red cedar wood for lamps and he'll curse the chain saw whine

it's not good enough these days to love the smell of the soil
as it thaws beneath a warm spring breeze
it takes a Class A mechanic's license, a computer
and one of them OAC degrees

it takes a pretty good accountant with a pretty good background
in the law to keep the bankers at bay
it takes a lot of pride to push the bitterness aside
and stand back and watch the neighbours move away

he remembers the ballgames on Saturdays in summer
when the whole district turned out to play
trading rumours with the boys at the cafe in town
back before the Reichmans siphoned all the credit away

it can get pretty cold up on the rooftop of Ontario
almost any night of the year
and the river that tries to drain this poor swampy ground
isn't big but it still runs cool and clear
and the starlight shines on the water
and his breath curls like smoke in the air
and he wishes he was leaving a son or a daughter
so that more than these fields would know that he'd been there

he remembers the Christmas Eve services in town
when the whole district turned out to pray
and the potluck suppers in the basement after harvest
back before the last of the pastors got transferred away

The Virginia Brand

I see that you wear the Virginia brand,
Stranger what brings you here to the banks of the Grand?
You have the bearing of my husband Daniel
Who died in the war.

He was killed at Queenston, just down from the falls,
He lost a race with a cannonball,
And he's left me alone, with two children and all,
And this farm I can't run anymore.

I work as hard as a man at the Loyalist Plow,
Though the furrows I turn you can see in my brow,
Yes, the flower of youth it is gone from me now,
And this hard life shows in my face.

I will stretch out a blanket across this small room,
You can see if I could be pleasing to you,
You could stay if you like, and just maybe the two
Of us might make a go of this place.

If you thought you could linger a while with me here
There are storms to be pulled, there are fields to be cleared;
We'd have something to show in a couple of years,
Who knows what the future might bring?
If the Grand doesn't flood out it's banks again,
And the frost doesn't kill off the new-grown grain,
If the mill gives us credit and you get us game,
Then we'll make it through till the spring.

There is hardly a soul comes this way anymore,
Oh the wagons stopped rolling right after the war,
I have not much to offer, I'm plain and I'm poor,
But alone this is too hard to face.
I will stretch out a blanket across this small room,
You can see if I could be pleasing to you,
You could stay if you like, and just maybe the two
Of us might make a go of this place.

Tell me how did you earn that Virginia brand,
It was given to you by a Yankee's hand,
You remind me a bit of my husband Daniel,
Who died in the war.

Brant County Roads

From the highlands of Dumfries to the Onandaga swamps
I have wandered the Brant County roads
Searching for a hand-out, some firewood to chop
And a bed somewhere out of the cold;
Choking on the dust from the shuffling feet
Of a thousand poor brothers like me
Thrown from our homes as the factories shut down
Cast loose upon a desolate sea.

Back in the Thirties couldn't make ten cents
Couldn't buy a pound of flour, couldn't pay a month's rent
It took a second war to come before the hard times went
Oh, I wonder what it meant

Then the posters went up on the recruiting office wall
And the troop trains rolled through every day,
And I got my first job in more than seven years
When the Liberty ships sailed away.

'Cause I stayed behind and took my place on the line
Beating Verity ploughshares into swords,
And the good times flowed back on a tide of cold steel
As Depression gave way to the war.

There were those who tried to pin a white feather on me
And they called me a coward and worse,
But there ain't a man here that I can't look in the eye
And throw back my own brand of curse.
For there's profits to be won when there's lives to be lost,
And then what is the debt that is owed
By a man who marched away the best years of his life
In the dust of the Brant County roads?

Lancashire Lasses

When I was still a little girl
I was a weaver in Lancashire
I learned to weave and not leave a flaw
And that's what brought me to Canada

I met a fine looking handsome man
He owned a mill on the river Grand
He needed weavers of high degree
And he hired twelve of my friends and me

We sailed away on the Lady Grey
Through desperate storms we did kneel and pray
The sailors mocked us and made great sport
Until we docked at the town of York

For Paris then we did board a stage
We kept our minds fixed on promised wages
The road was rough and the journey long
Our spirits sank though our faith was strong

When first I laid eyes upon the mill
It was so fair I swear my heart stood still
Stone walls so high and the looms so new
Twixt warp and woof how our shuttles flew

With all the skill in our young girls' hands
We wove the finest cloth in the land
And soon on trams all down from Brantford
Young men came calling to pay us court

In the new world the weaving trade
Is well respected and highly paid
How glad I am now I did endure
The trip to Paris from Lancashire

Pioneer Tower Road

When my brother and I
Had our ponies we would ride
All summer long and there was just one place we'd go
To that tower on the hill
Beside the river. They had built
It there to honour all the pioneers on the Pioneer Tower Road.

We'd climb up that tower
And for hour after endless hour
We would watch that old river flow.
Sometimes we'd scramble up that ridge
Till we could see the Freeport Bridge
And then we'd amble home along the Pioneer Tower Road.

Those days back in Doon
We were just two Daniel Boones
There was nothing that we couldn't do,
Or that we didn't know.
It was 1965
And it seemed that our lives
Would last forever always living by
The Pioneer Tower Road.

We'd imagine that we saw
Those Conestoga wagons wind along
The old Indian Trail down below.
We'd pretend that we were pioneers
From Pennsylvania coming here
To make a brand new life along the Pioneer Tower Road

And from there we'd think a lot
About what those first settlers thought
When they stood on this spot so long ago.
We figured that they would have known
Their travelling days were finally over
Like us they had found a home on Pioneer Tower Road.

Standing here like us
Those pioneers must have shared
That sense of wonder that our young faces showed.
Way back then
This world was just as new to them
As it was to us when
We lived on Pioneer Tower Road.

Tamarack can be contacted at:

SGB Productions
Box 714
Guelph, ON
Canada N1H 6L3

telephone: 519-767-0142

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3. **The Song My Paddle Sings** (3:00) words Pauline Johnson, music © 1993 James Gordon, pub. SGB GWEN SWICK vocal JAMES GORDON guitar, recorder ALEX SINCLAIR guitar
4. **Lochaber No More/Skirl of the Pipes** (5:12) © 1993 James Gordon JAMES GORDON vocal, pennywhistle ALEX SINCLAIR guitar IAN BELL bagpipes
5. **The Elora Mill** (3:30) © 1993 Alex Sinclair ALEX SINCLAIR vocal, guitar GWEN SWICK bass JAMES GORDON pennywhistle, accordion
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10. **Brant County Roads** (4:00) © 1993 Gwen Swick & Alex Sinclair, pub. SGB GWEN SWICK vocal, bass ALEX SINCLAIR guitar, vocal JAMES GORDON accordion
- *11. **Buried Treasure** (3:02) © 1993 James Gordon, pub. SGB JAMES GORDON vocal, banjo Carole Leclair vocal, guitar, bass ALEX SINCLAIR vocal SHELLEY COOPERSMITH violin CHRIS TERHUNE mandolin
- *12. **Dufferin County** (3:40) © 1993 Alex Sinclair, pub. SGB ALEX SINCLAIR vocal, guitar Carole Leclair vocals, bass JAMES GORDON vocal, accordion, percussion SHELLEY COOPERSMITH violin CHRIS TERHUNE mandolin
- *13. **Pioneer Tower Road** (3:11) © 1993 James Gordon, pub. SGB JAMES GORDON vocal, guitar, harmonica CAROLE LECLAIR vocal, bass, percussion ALEX SINCLAIR vocal, mandolin SHELLEY COOPERSMITH violin

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